

About the USSR

4.1 The realization of the historical powers of the capitalist mode of production

The capitalist mode of production is the way in which the development of the material productive forces of society is governed upon reaching, in its historical course, a specific necessity: that of focusing on the transformation of the productive capacities of individual free labor into the productive capacities of collectively organized labor consciously directed by the same collective worker who performs it. Thus, it can only fulfill this historical reason for its existence at the expense of first dissolving any direct general organization of social labor based on personal dependency relations. It thereby gives each special fragment of labor the concrete form of private labor. The allocation of society's total labor capacity in its various useful concrete forms is then organized through an autonomous system. In this system, the material product of labor is simultaneously the bearer of the general social relation; the product is determined as a commodity. Social production no longer has the immediate objective of producing use-values, but rather the production of the general social relation itself, the production of value. And the production of value finds its completed form in the valorization of value itself, that is, in the production of surplus value. The material product of social labor, bearing the general social relation, thus becomes the very subject of social production and consumption, capital. Capital not only produces and reproduces itself, but it also produces and reproduces human beings as its personified form of existence. The free consciousness and will of the worker and the capitalist has no determination other than being the concrete necessary form of the alienation of the powers of human labor as the powers of capital. Thus, the working class has no source of revolutionary power to overcome capitalism other than what the realization of the historical reason for its existence can provide it. Therefore, even that revolutionary power is, in itself, a human power alienated as the power of capital itself. And certainly, capital ensures that it gives that power to the working class.

The extraction of relative surplus value, that is, the cheapening of labor power through the constant technical revolution that multiplies the

productivity of labor applied to the production of their means of subsistence is the most powerful way of valorizing capital. But it is also the way in which capitalism realizes its historical role. The renewed production of relative surplus value necessarily follows its course in the unity of two processes: the increasing concentration of every private fragment of social capital, and the subordination of the organization of social production and consumption to science.

Immediately, the growing concentration of capital on the basis of the production of relative surplus value is presented to the working class as a process in which an increasing part of it is consolidated as surplus for the needs of capital. In a bloodthirsty way, capital thus strips this portion of the working class even of its generic human being. That is, it strips it of its generic capacity to transform nature into a means to itself through labor, condemning it to death. But concentration also means the expansion of the scale of the conscious organization of social labor within each private fragment of social capital, that is, of each individual capital. This organization then escapes the subjective capacity of the capitalist to personify it. At the same time, the concentration of capital means that its accumulation increasingly needs to be realized through the direct organization of social labor beyond the reach of each of the private fragments of social capital. And this organization has political action in the class struggle, as a concrete form of realization itself.

In turn, the need to subordinate social production and consumption to their scientific organization exceeds the subjective capacity of the capitalist class to personify this organization. Moreover, with the development of the machinery system, the essence of human labor changes. This becomes the application of human labor power to the control of natural forces, making them act automatically in a way appropriate to the transformation of the object. The production of relative surplus value not only determines the worker as a directly collective subject but also places in the hands of the worker the conscious control of his own labor process. At the same time, however, it can only do this by deepening the mutilation of the worker's subjectivity, either by alienating him from his own product (when he remains active) or from the very possibility of producing his life (when he is thrown into the surplus population).

When it exercises a power that belongs to it only insofar as it confronts it as an alien power, belonging to capital, the working class no longer limits itself to being responsible for the direct process of production. It also takes charge of organizing that process, both within the factory and in terms of the general social character of its labor. The working class thus becomes the necessary general personification of its own alienated general social relation, of capital. The development of capital accumulation, in doing so, strips the capitalist class of its own historical reason for existence, on a double basis. On the one hand,

the concentration of capital clashes with its private property. And not merely with particularly restricted forms of this ownership, but with it in itself: the private fragmentation of social capital becomes an obstacle to its accumulation. On the other hand, the transcendence of the capitalist's subjectivity as the general representative of their own capital turns the bourgeoisie into a mere social parasite, whose consumption detracts from the potential accumulation of capital. The accumulation of capital therefore needs to take concrete form in a social revolution in which the working class annihilates the bourgeoisie, centralizing capital as directly social property.

However, since it is precisely a power of capital personified by the working class, the latter can only continue to confront its own product as an alien power. It is thus confronted with its own materialized general social relation constituted in the subject of social life, capital, as a property belonging directly to the general political representative of that subject, the state. As we pointed out in the first chapter, *a process of capital accumulation where the complete execution and control of the labour process is in the hands of the wage-workers, and capital is the collective property of these same workers under the necessary form of state capital, is the most developed form of the alienation of human powers as powers of capital.* In it, all forms of alienated consciousness reach their full development. And all the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production reach their full development. In particular, this is the case with the most essential contradiction of the capitalistic mode of production: capital is simply a historical form taken over by the development of the material productive forces of society, a form in which human subjects realize their generic being, which, at the same time, becomes the very concrete subject of social life. And this subject becomes to the point of turning every aspect of it into a personification of its needs, including the dispossession of a growing part of the working class even of its very humanity.

However, as the most developed form of the alienation of human powers as powers of capital, it is also the form in which capitalism attains its fullness as a mode of development of the material productive forces of society. And, consequently, it is the form in which the capitalist mode of production fulfills its historical reason for existence. From then on, only one path remains open for the development of social productive forces to continue revolutionizing their own foundation. It can only do so by annihilating the very foundation of the capitalist mode of production. The task is to overcome the capitalist organization of the development of the productive powers of free individual labor as productive powers of consciously regulated social labor. That is, to overcome the organization of that development carried out through the determination of the material product of the same social labor as an autonomous bearer of the general social relation. And, therefore, to overcome a

way of organizing social production that is determined within itself as a negation of the powers of consciously governed social labor.

Thus, the development of the material productive forces of society needs to take the concrete form of a new social revolution. This time, one in which the proletariat frees itself from the dictatorship that capital makes it impose on itself. The working class therefore needs to surpass itself by transforming its members into freely associated individuals. Only then does history first reach the point where the realization of the generic human being, that is, conscious and voluntary action on nature in order to transform it into a means for human life, has ceased to be, at the same time, a concrete form of negation of this human capacity. It is the general conscious organization of the process of production of social life. In this general social relationship, each individual recognizes himself immediately, as an inherent attribute of his own subjectivity, in his condition as an individual embodiment of the social powers of his labor.

4.2 The National Form of Capital Accumulation

In its revolutionary power to blow itself up into the air by generating the material necessity of society for freely associated individuals, capital advances by dissolving every sphere that excludes the universality of social labor. Therefore, the accumulation of capital is essentially a worldwide process. However, it can only develop the powers of social labor by executing them in the concrete form of its contrary, that is, as private labor. Consequently, its global essence is necessarily realized by fragmenting into different national processes of capital accumulation that confront each other. This fragmentation of capital fragments the working class. It does so by specifically linking the fate of each national portion of the working class to that of the capital that exploits it within that same national sphere. Through this mediation, the centralization of capital as the property of the national state, through the revolutionary action of the country's working class, is not simply the realization of this class's powers to take full control over the organization of its own social labor as a power alienated in capital. The historic leap in the capacity of the national working class in this sense is determined as a concrete form of the strengthening of the respective national process of capital accumulation, in relation to others.

No matter how much capital becomes collectively owned within its national sphere of accumulation, it is as private as any other when it comes to the external sphere. It is, therefore, a private fragment of social capital that extracts relative surplus value with the power granted to it by having been centralized on a scale that encompasses the entire social production of its country. And, even more, with the one that gives it the will of the workers themselves who feed their insatiable hunger for surplus value, because their property belongs to them, freed from the burden of bourgeois property. Of course, needing to confront its owners as a power that is alien to them and dominates them, this capital cannot determine itself as a directly social property. That is why it can only be determined as a property of the general representative of the national

society which, at the same time, presents itself as a power external to it: the national state. The leap forward made by the revolutionary consciousness of the working class is reversed in the apologetics of 'the great Soviet homeland,' of 'our dear mother Russia.' Because, as we have already seen, considered in itself, the national form that historically takes the universal essence of capital accumulation is not an expression of its revolutionary powers to annihilate itself in the development of the conscious general organization of social life. On the contrary, it is a specific historical limitation on those powers.

Hence the revolutionary character of the USSR, with a national proletariat taking into its own hands for the first time in history the conscious organization of its social labor, although reproducing this organization as an alienated attribute in capital. But also hence the limitation of that character.

Thus determined, the fate that this collectively owned capital may encounter within its national sphere when competing with the rest of the world's capitals to appropriate surplus value does not immediately reflect the power of the absolute concentration of social capital as collective property compared to any type or degree of private capital concentration. It simply reflects the effectiveness achieved by a specific form of private capital relative to other no less restricted forms of private capital, which together with it constitute the total capital of society at a certain stage in the capitalist development of its material productive forces.

At the same time, the revolutionary centralization of capital in the USSR does not result from the fullness achieved by that capital in its accumulation process. Nor, consequently, from the full development of the national working class as a collective worker capable of consciously controlling the entirety of its own social labor. On the contrary, this centralization is what, so to speak, facilitates the general development of the national process of capital accumulation. Through it, a relatively limited capital, distant from the technical vanguard, acquires the power to develop the accumulative force provided by having within its national reach an enormous latent working population, accustomed to living very austerely and subjected to the control of a strongly centralized direct authority, along with enormous latent natural wealth and forces.

4.3 The ideological reversal of the absolute national centralization of capital as realized socialism

The condition of the most developed national mode of the alienation of human powers as powers of capital achieved by the USSR means that this very mode takes concrete form, representing itself in an inverted manner in the consciousness of the working class from which it extracts surplus value. It thus presents itself as the realized negation of capitalist production, in the directly conscious organization of social life: socialism or communism accomplishes both. And as an ideological inversion whose purpose is to represent capitalist alienation as the realization of full human consciousness, it needs to be produced in the form of its opposite, that is, scientific knowledge. By its very ideological nature, the production of this knowledge apparently cannot start from analyzing the simplest form that the general social relation takes within the national sphere, that is, from the analysis of the commodity. Starting from the analysis of the value form that the product of labor takes in that sphere would inevitably lead it to confront capital as the concrete subject of social production within it. Thus, it begins by stating the content of the general social relation prevailing in the national sphere through the immediate appearance of property relations within it: the abolition of the bourgeoisie, a necessity imposed by capital, thus presents itself inverted as the straightforward liquidation of the capitalist mode of production.

The appearance produced on this basis proceeds smoothly as long as the view is confined to the interior of absolutely centralized capital which, as such, encompasses (more precisely tends to encompass) the entire social production. There, as happens within any individual capital, only here on a national scale, all social labor is governed according to a plan. As within any individual capital, the product of labor passes from one hand to another without ever having to take the form of a commodity. But this appearance bursts as soon as one steps outside the single capital to confront the process of reproducing labor power. Here it becomes clear that, ultimately and beyond the appearance of absolute planning, what prevails is the autonomous organization of social production through the buying and selling of labor power and the corresponding buying and selling of the means of subsistence necessary to reproduce this labor power to be consumed again and again by capital. After all, absolutely concentrated capital still needs to feed on the attributes of the doubly free worker. This evidence can only be concealed by ideologically mutilating consciousness regarding the historical specificity of the value form that the product of labor takes. Only in this way can it be apologetically stated that the commodity and, even more so, money, as a synthetic expression that it is not human consciousness that regulates social production but rather faces its own material product as an alien power dominating it, continue to exist in the socialist economy, only now as an expression of the full exercise of human consciousness.

The ideological reversal exhausts its development with the proclamation of the already achieved realization of socialism as the constitutional foundation of the Soviet nation. The constitutional charter of a nation is the most general form of the legal fiction proper to capitalist production. Through this legal fiction, the private character of social labor makes individuals appear as mutually independent of each other by nature and in need of establishing their social relationship through the expression of the contractual will proper to the owners of commodities. Thus, what by its form cannot be anything other than the product of a society where individuals confront their own social powers as a power external to themselves that dominates them, is presented under the appearance of being the product of its opposite, of the general conscious organization of social life.

It is in this way that Soviet social science specifically contrasts with that of capital in general. It does so because, by also erasing the historical specificity of capital as an alienated subject of social life, its purpose is not to represent capitalism as the natural and eternal form of social organization. Its function is to represent it as historically surpassed, when it is not. And it is this specificity of its function that gives it a specific form as well.

Marx has developed the scientific evidence of the inherent necessity within capitalism to annihilate itself into socialism or communism. Through the development of dialectics, Marx has revolutionized the scope of scientific knowledge. He has transformed its method, leaving behind the representation of real forms constructed according to an ideal necessity external to them, logic, to develop it as the reproduction of the inherent necessity of real forms through thought. By thus transforming his method, he has transformed science, taking it from being the necessary mode governing the production of relative surplus value (as it still is in its initial form), to being the concrete necessary form of the working class's consciousness in the process of transcending itself as a power alienated in capital. Therefore, he has developed science as the concrete necessary form for organizing the political action of the working class. In doing so, he has shown how, by its form, dialectics advances beyond all appearances. Thus, he has put an end to the appearance, inherent to the scientific method as the consciousness of the mere reproduction of relative surplus value, that science necessarily falls into the interpretation of reality and that, consequently, it needs to have its foundation in the negation of itself as objective knowledge, that is, in philosophy.

Just as the social science of the USSR's national capital declares the accumulation of it as the realization of the overcoming of capitalism, everything is interpreted from Marx in the way that is most convenient. The revolutionary development of reproducing reality through thought is degraded to its inverse, that is, to a conception, to an interpretation of the world, which is represented as Marxism.

The apologists for the rest of social capital, which does not need to hide under the appearance of being its own accomplished overcoming but openly boasts of its own rot as such, cannot ask for more. What according to its own defenders is 'realized socialism' presents the same bloody and repulsive forms as the harshest capitalism. And even worse, since it is a form of capitalism intensified by the absolute centralization of capital on a national scale. Thus, the unabashed apologists can afford to proclaim that even if capitalism were not eternal, it would deserve to be. And, with the certainty granted by having now empirically verified it, they proclaim that capitalism is not merely a historical form, but the very realization of human nature. How else can one explain the persistence of its forms when it has been replaced by a social organization whose proponents claim it as its overcoming? Marxism and anti-Marxism thus merge, as the two sides of the same coin.

4.4 The Retreat of Capital from the Production of the Universal Worker to the Production of the Differentiated Worker

As a process of capital accumulation, the Soviet economy is subject to the general law of this accumulation: the growing production of a surplus working population, with its consequent progressive pauperization. And, as a national form of capital accumulation, it cannot prevent this law from manifesting itself to some degree within its own boundaries. However, one of the foundations on which the ideological illusion of having surpassed capitalism rests lies in the apparent extinction of this general law within the USSR. In particular, during the crisis of general overproduction in the 1930s. Firstly, the centralization of capital as state property boosts its capacity to accumulate beyond that of privately restricted capitals within other national domains. By the time capital has exceeded its own specific limits in these domains, in the USSR it has expanded its horizon in a single stroke. But, secondly, the general necessity of capitalism to produce a surplus working population does not manifest simultaneously in the USSR because capital itself expeditiously eliminates it. The First World War is followed by the civil war, then the purges, and after that the Second World War (where the armed working class, representing another portion of social capital privately owned within its national domain, makes the Soviet working class pay with particular harshness for its resistance to the absolute national concentration of its own capital). This war is followed by a long period in which capital accumulation expands without the need to produce a surplus working population becoming visible in the countries where it focuses its active development. Indeed, this expansion is shown to be reinforced for the capital of the USSR, thanks to the scale provided by its national concentration.

But the moment comes again when the limit that the capitalist way of organizing social production imposes on its expansion becomes increasingly evident. Thus, the formation of the surplus working population becomes visible without needing to search for it in the national spheres that capital accumulation leaves behind as nothing more than reservoirs of it. This occurs even in those areas where this accumulation shows its most active face. However, it is not merely a numerical increase. As we have seen, throughout the 20th century, capital accumulation was sustained by the production of a working class capable of performing increasingly complex and intense work on a mass scale within its national context. Hence, the social capital of each country tended to directly take into its own hands the production of the general character of the national workforce: this is a period characterized by the development of public education, public health, public entertainment, public housing construction, etc. It is no coincidence that the centralization of capital within the country as the capital of the national state, and its political form of apparent transcendence of capitalism, the USSR, is an inherent form of this period of the capitalist mode of production.

However, now, based on the technical foundation and the surplus working population achieved through this relatively universal development of the labor force, capital accumulation comes to focus on a differentiation within it. On the one hand, it needs to emphasize the development of the portion of the collective worker whose labor process consists of controlling the forces of nature, applying them to the productive transformation of their object. On the other hand, this same advancement in controlling natural forces multiplies the portions of the collective labor process that still consist of the direct application of labor power to the transformation of their object. Thus, for the moment, capital needs to counteract its general tendency toward the universality of the productive and circulating worker. It needs to deepen the distinction within the collective worker, between the portion that takes a new leap forward in developing their ability to control the collective labor process, and the portion that only serves insofar as it extracts from them the last drop of simple surplus labor as quickly as possible.

In the previous phase, it was cheaper for capital to spend on the mass production of relatively undifferentiated labor. Now it is cheaper to individually include in the value of the first type of labor the costs corresponding to its skilled production, and to refrain from spending on the second more than is necessary to reproduce it strictly to the degree of its rapid wear and replacement by another new one coming from the always expanded industrial reserve army. In turn, the same technical development that accentuates differentiation within the collective worker creates the means of production that allow them to directly coordinate their work, even though their partial organs are spatially dispersed beyond any national borders.

From a simple general condition to enhance the accumulation of capital on a national scale, the magnitude of the citizen working population comes to contain a specific obstacle to it. Now, the key is for the working population to be restricted to the mass of labor force necessary to perform the most complex labor within the country. And that it is complemented by the labor force that performs simple labor outside the country, or within it but deprived of the condition of citizenship.

The general need of capital to expand its scale of accumulation beyond national borders thus develops on the specific basis of the international fragmentation of social production on the basis of the differentiation of the productive subjectivity of the worker of large-scale industry.

No matter how large its national sphere of accumulation may be, these transformations are not at all beneficial to capital that is completely centralized as the property of the working class within the USSR. Due to the same political and ideological appearance in which the organization of its accumulation takes concrete shape as a negation of the capitalist mode of production itself, this capital cannot release a portion of itself to valorize in another national sphere. If it did, it would clash with the appearance, necessary for the realization of its general valorization, of being the overcoming of all appropriation of surplus value. The same would happen with that same appearance, as the outward flow of a portion of it would inevitably accentuate the transition of part of the national working class to the condition of surplus. Essentially, this national process of capital accumulation is restricted in its expansion beyond its borders to international trade, whether based on a free market or through direct coercion. At the same time, given the same appearance in question, this capital also cannot reproduce on an expanded scale by deepening the differentiation within the collective worker who owns it, violently pushing part of them into disqualification and pauperism while increasing the mass of use values received by the other part.

The concentration of capital as collective property within the USSR has proven to be a way to enhance capital accumulation, enough to make this national sphere the second largest in the world. However, now it has reached the moment to starkly reveal its own limitation in relation to the global character of the powers of the capitalist mode of production. And this is despite the fact that in these global powers, the simple transcendence of their national form does not yet prevail, but rather a specific regression of capitalism in its historical necessity to produce a universal worker, based on the deepening of national differentiations.

As a characteristic form of an economic system in which the norm can only be imposed through violent fluctuations, Soviet capital reveals its inability to sustain its capacity for accumulation. It then falls into a process of rapid decentralization. Its centralization could have taken no other form than that of a social revolution in which the victorious national working class abolished all property-owning classes of means of production in the country. But now, it is a matter of the loss of the powers resulting from that centralization, and the massive transition of the national working population to the manifest condition of surplus. The decentralization of this capital, private in relation to the global essence of accumulation but by far the most concentrated in the world, can only have as its political form the dismemberment of the national sphere and the criminal plundering by the private capitals, which are now also private within their own national sphere, having been formed at its expense. Even so, it remains to be seen in what forms it will restart its concentration from the new base provided by its decentralization. It could very well do so by violently recentralizing as capital of directly social property within a newly expanded national sphere, only with the differentiation within the working class already consolidated as an externally given circumstance.

Just as the ideological spokespersons of capital, both the openly apologetic and the pseudo-critical, previously believed that this was a leap outside the capitalist mode of production, they now think they see a return from 'achieved socialism' to capitalism. But, under this appearance, all that has taken place are merely two changes in the form of private ownership of a national portion of the total social capital. The scope of the capitalist mode of production has never been transcended. However, the initial step was an expression of the power of the capital in question to actively participate in the development of society's material productive forces. More specifically, it was an expression of the advancement in transforming the attributes of the doubly free individual worker's labor into powers of social labor consciously organized by the collective worker who carries it out. That is, it was an expression of the advancement of the capitalist mode of production in fulfilling its historical reason for existence. In contrast, considered from the perspective limited to the same portion of social capital, the second step is an expression of its regression as the bearer of those historically revolutionary powers.

4.5 The revolutionary consciousness of the working class

It is of no use to the production of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class to cling to the appearances of the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production, and its subsequent return, when it has only unfolded at each moment the concrete forms of its development. The same applies to the reduction of the concrete way in which the total labor capacity of a portion of society is allocated under its various useful forms, to the degeneration of an abstract 'workers' state,' or to the betrayal and bureaucratization of its leaders.

On closer inspection, from the first to the last, these conceptions are based on the inverted belief that it is consciousness that determines the material conditions of human life, and not these conditions that determine consciousness as the necessary concrete form of its social organization through the voluntary action of individuals. For all these conceptions start from the appearance, inseparable from the capitalist mode of production, that the alienated consciousness of the working class is opposed by the possibility of an abstract, free consciousness of its own. But the working class only develops its revolutionary consciousness as the personification of a power that confronts it as foreign, yet, as such, carries within itself the necessity of transforming that consciousness into the alienated consciousness that negates its own alienation. It is not, therefore, a revolutionary consciousness that derives its powers from an abstract condition of freedom (as it seems to those who remain prisoners of the appearances of the circulation of commodities). On the contrary, it is a revolutionary consciousness that derives its powers from being the negation of the negation of free consciousness.